

NH P
971.1Ca
P564

PEACE TOWER
RICE
JAN 3 '88 \$4.00

8



THE STIKINE RIVER: THE ROUTE TO KLONDYKE

BY CLIVE PHILLIPS-WOLLEY

[This article, the publication of which has been unavoidably postponed, was written early in the year 1895. It will be found of special interest at the present time. Not only does the writer foretell the great rush of gold-seekers which has since taken place, but he describes the new route to the Klondyke. The illustrations, which are from photographs taken by the author, give an idea of the desolate and wild scenery of the district.]

MEN do not expect to find a fairyland on any continent to-day, and least of all in our somewhat Scotch and practical Nor'-West. Even the South Sea Islands have a commercial interest as sugar producers, and send round a show of not too ingenuous maids and men; and though, when the grouse are drumming and the cedar swamps are heavy with the musk of the skunk cabbage, I sometimes fancy that I catch a glimpse of fairyland through the green lacework of hemlock and cedar on Vancouver Island, I know that I am wrong; the red gold is but the gold of the honeysuckle drooping over the deep blue of a forest tarn, and the tiny mailed knights are only bronze-bodied humming-birds darting or poising amongst the blossoms.

But if our fairyland has been explored and exploded, our Jötunheim, thank Heaven, remains. Here we call our Jötunheim Cassiar and Beyond, and it lies, as Jötunheim must lie, to the north of us, beyond seas of the North Pacific, as grey with mist, as vexed by storms, and as full of all vague and monstrous shapes as ever were the seas where the Vikings held sway.

Look at the two seas on the map and you will find them in about the same latitude (the North Sea, I mean, and the seas round Fort Wrangel), and though they lie a world apart, you will, if you look at them in Nature, find them not alone alike, inlet for fiord, and pine for pine, but alike in the dreams they suggest,

and maybe alike in the future in the race they shall produce. That breed of men which has braced and strengthened a whole world with the salt of the North Sea is finding a congenial home in the North Pacific, under conditions and amongst environments uncommonly like those from which it drew its first gigantic strength. We are sea things still, we English, and the grey roughness of northern seas to battle against suits us better than the luxuries of civilisation and the sloth of peaceful days.

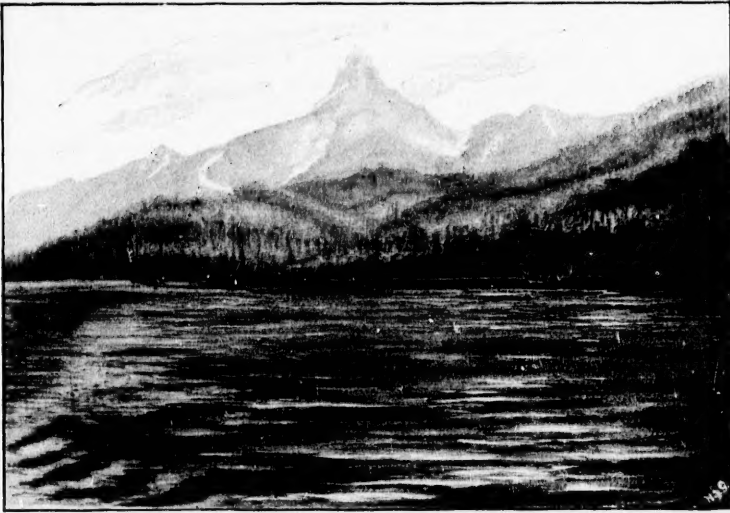
The gates of our Jötunheim are at the mouth of the Stikine River, which is the first stage on the road and a vast country still unexplored, with reserves of gold and fur still untouched; a country peopled by primitive men still free from the curse of civilisation and the responsibility of a moral law; a country teeming with great game, full of questions to be solved and knowledge to be acquired; a country which stretches from the coast range to the Arctic, having an area of nearly 200,000 square miles.

But men are already peering beyond the gates of Jötunheim. The whisper of 'Gold on the Jakon!' has been heard unmistakably this year, and soon the reckless, fearless leaders whom all the world follows but ignores, the prospectors and pioneers, in blue overalls and flannel shirts, stone-broke and perfectly happy, will pour down the Arctic slope as they have poured across the Pacific slope, in California, in Cariboo, and on the Fraser. Good luck be with them! They may be rough, but they are *men*, and that is much in these days. Already there are towns in Yankee Yukon, Circle City, Fort Andally, and a settlement, I fancy, on Golden Miller Creek, from which men took not a few pounds in dust last year, though there were but 900 to 1,000 miners in the whole of the Yukon district. This year there will be a rush; in 1896 there will be, if reports are still favourable, a greater rush; already roads to the Unknown are being surveyed, and my daily paper contains a notice that someone has applied to the dominion for a charter to build a railway from the Jaku River, which is unexplored and over which we have no rights of navigation, to Teslin Lake.

It is time, then, if we would sketch the old life of the Stikine and Cassiar, to do so at once. From time immemorial the great river has been the Indian's main road from the coast to the interior, the market-place upon which were exchanged the strange things of civilisation for the furs of the Far North.

Certain families of Phlinkits (Coast Indians) had a monopoly of this business with the interior and compelled the Tal Tans

91- from the head of the river to do all their trade with them ; no doubt the Tal Tans in their turn had similar arrangements with the Kaskas, and they with some one else a hundred miles further north, until, after years of freighting, the goods of Birmingham rested in the possession, say, of a Yellow Knife hunter of musk oxen, on the barrens beyond Great Slave Lake. I wonder what proportion the last price in those days bore to the first price, since even now a rifle which costs eleven dollars at Seattle can be



TOWING A FREIGHT BOAT PAST SACHOCHLE

sold for about fifty dollars just beyond the head of steamboat navigation ?

As far as white men are concerned the history of the Stikine began in 1834, when the Hudson Bay Company tried to make use of it as a road to the Cassiar fur district. In this attempt the Hudson Bay Company was frustrated by the Russians, who, however, subsequently leased their Fort Dionysius (or Wrangel), together with the Alaskan coast strip, to the Company.

Fur-seekers first, as usual ; but the gold-seekers were not far behind them. In 1861 Choquette came wandering through from heaven knows where, with pick and shovel and pan, and found gold on the river bars. This brought the first wave of miners to the country. In 1873 Thibert (a little Frenchman) and

McCullough found gold on the streams which run into Dease Lake, having wandered thither from the Red River by way of the Liard, trusting for food principally to the fish in the lakes *en route*.

In two years from two to four thousand miners had joined Thibert and McCullough in their scramble for gold, and about two million dollars' worth of dust was sent down from Cassiar to the coast in that time; but McCullough got caught by winter on 'the desert' at the mouth of the Stikine, out of reach of help though in sight of home, and died there of cold or hunger, whilst the last time I met Thibert he was trying to make a dollar by his old trade of harness-maker. He was about equally anxious to sell dog-collars and to 'get a show' to go to the Jakon next spring. Like all the boys he is sanguine still, though he has seen several millions drop through his fingers without a dime of it sticking to them.

Since 1875 the Cassiar has gradually relapsed into its natural quiet. A few prospectors still crawl in and out, tattered, toil-bent men, mere ghosts of the past; but the darkest hour has come, and it will soon be dawn again on the Stikine.

We know so little nowadays of the meaning of hardship, that for the sake of education a few more men should visit our Nor'-West and see for themselves what a fisher's or hunter's life is in crank canoes amongst the islands of the North Pacific, or look on at, if they could not share, the lives of the gold-seekers.

They might then know what courage means; might even take a low degree in the art of travel, which has nothing to do with Pullman cars and Cunard steamers; might learn that though wet socks will give the townsman a cold in the head if he does not 'change as soon as ever he gets in,' a season of soaking *in the open air* will give neither cold nor rheumatism to a sixty-year-old trapper; might have some rough guess of what sixty degrees below zero means in pain and suffering, and be able to decide whether it is better to pack your blankets *and three months' provisions* on your own back, or to take with you a dried salmon and your rifle, trusting to the latter and some rabbit snares for food and to a blazing log for nightly warmth, when bedded down on a pile of pine boughs in the snow.

These are the things which pioneers and gold-seekers and Hudson Bay men know. When we read their dry old voyages, mere statements of how far they went and where they camped, we do not realise what these old heroes dared, what these hard,

silent Scotchmen suffered; we don't understand what 'made twenty miles up the Stikine against a head wind' means in hard labour, any more than we guess that the statement that 'François pushed 200 lbs. across the portage' should be supplemented by the statement that he afterwards died in Victoria, while still a young man, from aneurism of the heart; we don't imagine for a moment that canoeing is anything but a pleasant, idle pastime, during which the head of the expedition lies on a robe and smokes; we can't believe that up some rivers there can be no passengers, and that an upset means death by starvation, if not



THE STIKINE RIVER

by drowning; for man, even the hardest and the handiest, cannot live in northern wilds without any artificial adjuncts, axe or hatchet, rifle or canoe.

Twice I have travelled on the Stikine. The first time I went as a bear-hunter, and it seemed to me that I had dropped in unexpectedly on the first day of creation. The earth, as seen through a black curtain of ceaseless rain, appeared to be without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The mouth of the river is in about the same latitude as Mull and the rainfall is much the same in both places (from 50 to 75 inches in Mull, and about 60 inches, according to Dr. Dawson, at Wrangel), but at Tongars the rainfall reaches 100 inches per annum, whilst

the snowfall at the mouth of the Stikine is sometimes ten feet deep. It is not a tourist's river, but it is a grand river for salmon and glaciers and grizzlies. The road to Wrangel from Victoria lies over a dull grey sea, flecked in autumn with little vicious white waves, and pitted by wind-driven rain. At times the mists clear and the sea looks a yachtsman's paradise, but as a rule the mist hides the distance, broken only by the shaggy outlines of pine-covered islands, from which rise spouts and columns of white fog.

On the sea front of such an island lies Wrangel, a townlet, for the most part on the beach, built, of course, of wood, and inhabited by hibernating miners and fish-eating Indians.

At one end of the one street are the wharf, the few stores, and the white men. One side of this street practically overhangs the sea by only a very few feet at high tide. Beyond the stores the street becomes one-sided; there is no room for houses on the seashore, where the Indian canoes lie on the weed-covered boulders and a hundred mongrel dogs fight day and night over fish offal. At the end of all is the house of Shek, the hereditary chief of the Phlinkits, reached by a single plank bridge across a slough. Shek is the best canoe captain on the Stikine, the representative of those wild monopolists who traded with the Tal Tans; he is owner of several magnificent totem poles, up which climb the tracks of the grizzly, and which hardly seem to lie when they suggest that Shek himself and his immediate ancestors have been evolved from the bear of his native river.

There is only one residence of any importance beyond the chief's, and that is the burying-ground, over which a winged saurian (with his anatomy painted outside) watches year by year, whilst the tall weeds struggle up to hide him, and men forget those who make the weeds grow rank.

There are no suburbs, no walks, no 'buggy rides' in Wrangel. You cannot take a constitutional if you want to. There are no trails in the woods; there are no beaches by the sea. If there is anything between wood and water, it is bog and boulder.

Man's life is fashioned by his environments. At Wrangel his environments are such that he slips quite naturally from his blankets into his 'gum' boots and macintosh; then, as Wrangel is a prohibition town, he goes round to a certain place and takes a drink; then he smokes a cigar, plays a game of patience with an old pack of cards in a corner, breakfasts in a devil of a hurry, as if the necessity of supporting life alone warranted such a waste of time, and then, if energetic, he may go down

to catch a basket of fish from the pier-head for his dogs, or give another fellow advice as to the best way to saw a log. Perhaps this sounds overdrawn. If so, try to start from Wrangel for the upper country, and by the time you have spent a week there waiting, you will begin to understand how it is that the impossibility of doing much makes men, even these naturally energetic men, too torpid to do anything. The climate, too, is to blame. Moss must grow there on all things animate and inanimate. Day and night, month after month, there is music in Wrangel—the music of water washing against the foundations of the houses, of water running in the streets, of rain rattling upon the roof-trees. The houses are rotten with rain, the road is a marsh, the sidewalk (of planks) is slippery with green vegetable growths, the living pines are mildewed at the top, grass waves from the top of the totem poles, and one church sags away so heavily from its stays that I hardly like to write of it as a thing that still is. Everything at Wrangel is wet and misty and has a half-created look. Even the law of the land is chaotic. Unique in this, I think Wrangel is subject to two codes of law, the law of Alaska and the law of Oregon, and, as I understand, it is open to those having authority to proceed under either code, as it is undoubtedly easy for those under authority to evade both. In all my experience of Wrangel I only heard a man grumble at the law once, and had he not cause? He was an ingenuous whiskey smuggler, for whom the authorities had provided rooms in the prison-house. At 9 P.M. he rushed into the saloon 'quite upset.'

'Damnation, boys!' he yelled; 'this whole institution is going to hell. Say! What do you think? I came along home about ten minutes ago and they would not let me in! *They have locked me out of the Skukum House for the night!*' If that was not severity, what is? but I understand that a more liberal and broad-minded administrator has now decided to furnish all tenants of the Skukum House with latchkeys.

And yet you see, after all I have said, Wrangel is a hard place to get away from, even on paper. Dr. Dawson says truly, in his report of 1887, that steamers, 'stern-wheelers of light draught and good power,' can navigate the river to Glenora, 126 miles from its mouth, 'and under favourable circumstances to Telegraph Creek, twelve miles further;' but they sometimes take over a fortnight to do it in, and employ their passengers for most of the time in getting the boat up stream, consequently it is not wonderful that a very great deal of the travel is done in canoes.

Now, a canoe is not much good without Indians, and when I

was last at Wrangel Indians were hard to hire. They don't like hard work more than other men, and boating on the Stikine is very hard; besides, for them Wrangel is a paradise. When the tide is out, their table is spread. There are clams and 'gumboots' for the gathering on the shore; anyone can catch a basket of fish from the pier, or a halibut large enough to feed a family for a week in the bay. Two Indians, when I was there last, killed fifty deer, two wolves, and a bear in about a fortnight's hunting on the islands within a few miles of the town, and there are always the white men's stores to loaf and smoke cigarettes in when they tire of their own rancherie.

So my friend and I could not get a crew. He proposed that we should paddle our own canoe, and assured me that if I made no 'misslick' with the paddle it would be all right.

But I was not prepared to promise that I would make no 'misslick' in 150 miles or so of canoeing on such a river, and therefore proposed instead that we should volunteer to go as two of the crew in a trader's boat, which was also detained for want of Indians. The canoe had nearly 4,000 lbs. of bulky freight on board, and only two 'Siwashes,' besides the steerer; but we were fairly strong men and known on the river, so Johnny the trader accepted our offer, and we not only worked our passage, but were offered thirty-five dollars and board if at any time we could find no easier way of earning our living than by taking freight up the Stikine.

At the mouth the Stikine runs about two miles an hour, higher up it has a current of from five to six miles an hour, and it is not difficult to imagine that a canoe piled high with bales which cramp the rowers' legs is no pleasure-boat for the crew, whether they propel it with clumsy oars in the slack water, with back-breaking, chest-contracting paddles, with poles on the shallows and in the rapids, or drag it at the end of a tow-line, walking waist-deep in the water, or skating over a bank of battered boulders set occasionally at a precipitous angle. But the work, though hard, is not the worst of the Stikine, though during our ten days we could rarely steal a pipe between breakfast and lunch, or lunch and dinner. If you were not rowing monotonously against a strong stream, you were poling for dear life, each man afraid to take an 'easy' because the strength of all was only just adequate to the strain. At the end of the rapid it would be necessary to cross the river; so that, just as you were prepared to sink from exhaustion, 'Jim the Boatman' would sing out, 'Get oars—quick—pull like——' and you pulled frantically,

careless whether your heart stopped or not, until the boat just made the end of the opposite sand-bar, when up went the oars, and everyone tumbled out into the water, ran out the line, hitched on the shoulder-straps, and started full pace at a new kind of slavery.

This kind of thing is common to all northern rivers, but the camps on the Stikine, below the cañon, are peculiar to the Stikine—luckily.

They are all on sand-bars, with one or two exceptions, and those are on gravel-beds. You cannot get back into the timber; it is too dense, and the nature of it is horrible to man. The



LUNCHEON ON THE STIKINE

undergrowth is largely of devil's club (*Farsia horrida*), a vile, broad-leaved growth, covered with thousands of fine thorns, which invariably cause a small fester before leaving your flesh, and even the spruces and other conifers are hard and thorny to the touch. You cannot push through the forest; you may consider yourself lucky if you find any boughs suitable for bedding near your camp, and luckier still if you can find decent wood to burn below the cañon. Above the cañon everything changes. There you reach the dry belt, where cultivated patches have to be irrigated; below you are in the wet belt, where you must sit and face your fire with a frying-pan if you want to keep it alight.

It is a cheerful position from which to survey life, that of fire-tender on the Stikine, when the dark begins to fall amongst the dumb woods, where no squirrels chatter, no birds call. The only signs of life around the camp are the great tracks on the sand (where last night the she bear and her cubs came down to fish), the 'houk houk' of passing geese, the splash of dying salmon on the creek where you filled your kettle, later on the resounding smack of the beaver's tail, and withal the tireless accompaniment of the rain. To such music you try to sleep, and not in vain, if your bed is a gravel-bar and not a sand-spit. On a gravel-bar you can find room for a sore bone between the pebbles, but sand packs harder than the bed of a billiard table, and your only chance then is to lie flat on your back, where there are no special corners to be worn down.

As elsewhere in British Columbia, the salmon is the basis of all life on the Stikine. Twice a year he comes flashing up from the sea, a dark swift shadow, which the Indians spear near the mouths of the Stikine's tributary streams. There is a white man's cannery at the mouth of the river, and several Indians' drying-grounds between the mouth and the Tal Tan fishery, but the toll these take seems to make no difference. Year after year the little streams are full of ill-formed, hook-nosed monsters, rotting as they swim, crimson with corruption, or colourless as they drift down stream, tails upward, dead and decomposing as they drift. None ever return to the sea, the Indians tell you, and though I have watched for days and weeks by these streams for bear, I have never yet seen anything like a 'mended' keel. And yet the supply continues, and bears pack the red fish up into the woods, eagles gorge themselves on them until they cannot fly, otherwise respectable mallards render themselves unfit for table by eating them, the grey seals follow them far up the river, the mink dines on them, and I almost suspect the porcupine of similar iniquity. But I may wrong this last beast. Poor old Salmon! I ought to be ashamed to look at you, for have I not killed you in every way but the legitimate one? Have I not speared you with sharpened pine-poles, shot you on the shallows, clubbed you with a paddle when you were left nearly high and dry, snatched you, tickled you, poached you generally? and yet it was your fault, because you are such an uncivilised idiot that you won't take a fly.

For a description of the river scenery when the rain stops and the clouds lift I must refer my readers to the illustrations, and for scientific information to the admirable report of Professor

Dawson, 1887, from which I have already quoted more than once.

I only propose to sketch the Stikine life as I saw it. This life begins from April to May, just before the ice breaks up; just after the bears have begun to leave their dens and to come out on the stone slides to crop the grass, and on to the river bottoms to look for young alder buds. At this time of the year a bear coat is prime, and is worth from twenty-five to thirty-five dollars to the Indians, and moreover at this time of the year even a grizzly can be hunted in snow-shoes with dogs without any



'CAPTAIN' KOW KEESH

great risk to the hunter. At any other time of the year the few bear-hunting Indians on the Stikine treat the grizzly with marked respect, letting him severely alone in summer, when with worthless, mangy coat he wanders about on the sand-bars, and in autumn depending upon huge snares set something like rabbit snares, rather than upon their rifles, for the few hides they get. Indeed, so shy is the Stikine Indian of the big brown bear that a friend of mine tells a story of two guides of his who used to 'tree' on sight of one.

The summer on the Stikine is the freighting season; a season of hard work, high water, and plenty. The low hoops of willow

wands left sticking in the sand-bars near old camp-fires tell the story of a misery peculiar to this season on the Stikine. Those hoops were put up to form the ribs of a kind of cocoon in which some poor wretch tried to avoid the mosquitoes.

The autumns, with their rains, I have sketched, and now, about the twentieth of October, I am starting from Telegraph Creek down stream. If you come with me I will give you a last glimpse of the river before the voice of it is stilled and the life of it hidden for the winter. Our object is to reach a certain salmon stream, to have a week with the big grizzlies on it before the river closes up, and to do this we must hurry, for our little two-man canoe is not the sort of thing to take chances in; indeed, to avoid the 'big riffle,' in which two people were drowned the day we came up, we walk a dozen miles and start below the bad water. Even after this we strike a snag submerged in rapid water, half fill, and only just get through, sticking to our paddles instead of stopping to sink. At the salmon stream we pick up an old trapper, and with him start at daybreak to cross a mountain spur, by doing which we hope to avoid many windings of our stream, and to strike it somewhere near its head waters. Two or three hours' brisk blundering, during which the snow shakes down our necks and melts inside our shirts, brings us out on to the stream, and in the far distance we can still see one bear on a sand-spit feeding. There are half a dozen bald-headed eagles feeding on salmon which bears have lately left; but the morning 'rise' of grizzly on our stream is over. We have come three hours too late for any stream on which men hunt; an hour too late, it seems, for a stream which has not been hunted. But the stream is still interesting, and the story of the sand-bars is as plain to read as if it was written in roundhand.

In the stream itself, a clear shallow tributary of a tributary of the Stikine, the salmon lie in pairs, 15 to 20 lb. fish as a rule, poised side by side in mid-stream, just moving their fins or tails sufficiently to keep their places against the current. The stream is full of them, and so far as we know there is not another stream in the district which has any fish in it. Most of the smaller 'criks' have already a thin coat of ice creeping out from their edges, and the whole of the stony bed of the main tributary is already covered with snow and ice. Where the salmon are, there will the bears be gathered together, and their tracks are all over the river's bank; there are roadways through the alders from the stone slides to the stream, broad footmarks with claws well-defined, footmarks in which you can stand with both feet,

and so distinct that if you were skilled in such matters you might read the bear's future by the lines on his palm ; tracks of single monsters, of a couple of chums, and of family parties, but all grizzlies. There are no narrow-heeled black bears here. We decide to try for the chums, and old Bert, who is grey-headed and slight-built, offers to go into the alder thicket between the 'slide' and the stream to 'hustle' the beggars out 'so as you can get a shot, Cap.'

To make a fitting finish for a magazine article, those bears ought to have been hustled out, or ought to have grievously chewed up poor old Bert. As a matter of fact they neither bolted



THE GREAT GLACIER ON THE STIKINE

nor charged, and I prefer foolishly to keep my fancy pictures for my boys' stories, which are avowedly yarns ; but one bear did show himself, 300 yards away ; a huge fellow, looking almost black in the sunlight, who walked quietly away and climbed slowly up the stone slide like one who hates exertion after a full meal, stopping from time to time to have a look at the intruder. I believe now that he would have let me run in close enough for a shot, but I did not know then how bold the bears were in this district, and I let him go until I saw him lie down on a ledge far up on the stone slide. Then I tried to climb another stone slide and come down from above him ; but the rock

face was steep and the climbing difficult, so that by the time I had almost reached my point, Bert had found and shot at another bear, and mine, hearing the shots, had moved away. When I got down again to the level, Bert was hauling driftwood together for a fire; but on my appearing he looked doubtfully at the darkening sky, and consented to try to reach camp that night. We had far better have caught a salmon and stayed where we were, for in a couple of hours the darkness had become complete, and we had, in an attempt to make a short cut, waded so many of the arms of the main stream that we found ourselves out in the middle of the river-bed, with more streams to wade, wet to the waist, and the next stream so swift and deep that the old man, after trying it for a little way, came back to me.

'It's too deep and too tarnation strong, Cap.; we couldn't make it, and we'll drown if we try.'

'Then what are we to do?' I asked.

'Make a fire, if we can; walk about all night or freeze solid if we can't. Scratch round in them drift piles under the snow and ice if you can't find a bit of bark.'

As luck would have it, I found a piece, and then stood and shivered whilst Bert filled his hat with shavings, and watched with interest whilst the tiny spark of light flickered and struggled, the only bright thing in that great gloom. But Bert nursed the little flame well, and in half an hour the drift-pile itself was on fire; we had poured the water out of our snow-boots and stripped ourselves to dry our clothes, and were being burned by the fierce sparks whilst we stood in the snow, the wind meantime curling like a whip-lash round our bodies. All that night we stood, scorching on one side and freezing stiff on the other, watching our hour-glass, the moon, sail so slowly across the broad valley, until she dipped behind the western ridge, and then the grey of morning came and we began to wade again. When we reached camp it was midday, and we had eaten nothing since dawn the day before; and the old man's only comment was, 'By George, the Cap. never let a grunt [*i.e.* grumbled] all night.' *He*, an old man of sixty-five, praising a stronger man twenty-five years his junior for bearing what he had borne! What must the measure of that old man's endurance be for himself? But these are the men who still push our frontiers to the North; men who are never heard of, who do not even know themselves what fine fellows they are, but talk with regret and bated breath of the colonial politicians, railway chartermongers, and boodlers whose doings fill the papers, and who sit in the high places in the synagogue.

We came across another specimen of Northern 'grit' when B., P., and I were up the Stikine before. Of course it was raining, and Bob, I think, was on the point of firing at a skein of Canada geese when a shout stopped him, and we both saw the craziest craft afloat come drifting towards us. No wonder the geese had been so scared by its appearance that they almost flew in our faces. It had been a canoe, and there were still parts of the original structure left, but the bottom of it was bandaged in a sail and held together by such an adjustment of rope and canvas as no one could have contrived but a British bluejacket; there were no oars, no paddles, no steering gear to this craft; the water lipped



PORTAGING AT GRAND RAPIDS

in every now and then over the side of it, and it always seemed a toss-up whether it sank or floated. And yet four men were trying to make a journey of 100 miles in it, down a swift and dangerous river, whose waters are so cold that even the stoutest can hardly live in them long enough to save himself!

When we had dragged the canoe to a sand-spit, three men carried a bundle of wet blankets from the bottom of their wreck, and laid it by the fire we were building.

By-and-bye the blankets opened, and a weak but cheery voice hailed us, 'How are you making it, boys? Seems to me this is pretty good.' The speaker was a lad of twenty-three, who had had

nothing to eat for, as far as I remember, thirty-six hours ; who had during that time lain in the bottom of the craft I have described, nearly blind, all but deaf, his face blue from the effects of a dynamite accident, and the stump of one of his arms still bleeding through the rough wrap in which it was bound !

In the spring, when the ice was considered unsafe, he had made his way alone up the river to Telegraph Creek, though he knew nothing of the road, or of the use of snow-shoes. Yet he arrived alive, though nearly starving. After a summer's work at the mine, he had blown himself up with dynamite (they call it 'giant powder' in Jötunheim), and after tying up the stump of an arm in his pocket-handkerchief, had been helped to sit a horse, from the mine to the river, upon which he had embarked with his mates, making down stream for the sea and a doctor. It was the old story, 'the more haste the less speed.' The 'boys' tried to run the river at night, struck a snag in rough water, and knocked the whole bottom out of the boat, losing oars and paddles, food and axe, and everything but their lives and the wreck of their canoe. As they struggled in the water for their lives, this is what they heard from the darkness of the mid-stream :

'Stay with it, boys ; don't mind me—I am bully.' The one-armed lad clinging to the snag that split the canoe, in that boil of waters, was thinking of the other men and was 'bully' ! Since then they had starved and shivered, and he must have suffered, but he never once complained.

Bob and I gave them all a square meal and then sent them on in our canoe with our Indians, sitting down ourselves on the sand-spit until they could send some one to us ; and I think, though the boy was an American citizen, we were proud men when we remembered that his name was Ferguson, and that therefore he probably came, as we came, 'of the Blood,' as Kipling puts it.

But I have left my bears behind somewhat abruptly, and indeed I had to, for as soon as I reached camp I found that the ice was running.

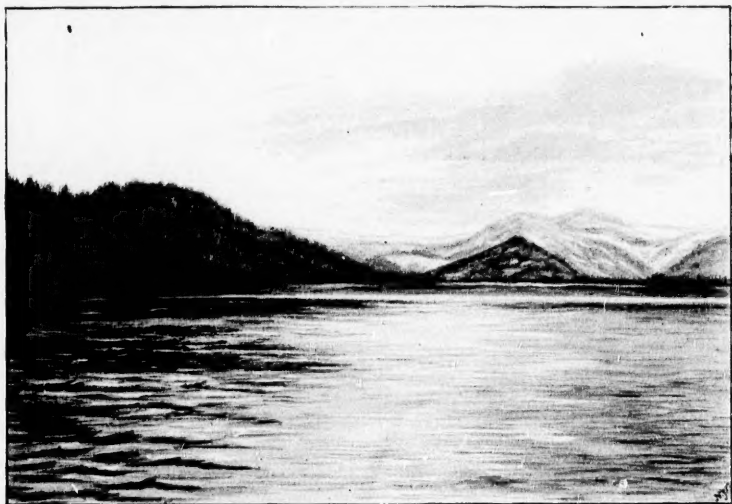
When we had had our last meal, some thirty hours before, the river was clear ; now great cakes of dirty ice-cream seemed to fill it from bank to bank, moving, too, so slowly that you almost expected every minute to see it stop and turn to hard ice under your eyes.

'You had better stop with me for the winter, Cap.,' urged Bert. 'I've got 600 lbs. of flour and some other stuff, and I'd be right glad to have your company.'

At that moment Bert, who is a poor man, had one (his only) companion dependent upon him; and though I refused, I know that he fully meant what he said when he offered to feed me and my two men for the winter. This is the way of poor men generally; it is the way of the men of the North always.

'Well, then, if you'll not stop, you'll have to take my boat. That coffin isn't safe, but it will do for me to drag my grub in up stream, or over the ice,' said Bert, and in this he had his way.

Ten minutes later we had eaten as much beaver-tail and damper as we could find room for, and were pushing our way down stream through the sludge ice, wondering if there are many



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE GREAT GLACIER

men in the world who at sixty-five can wade all day in half-frozen water, who will try to beat out grizzlies like pheasants, or who will offer a winter's board and their only boat to comparative strangers.

That afternoon we ran out of the ice and camped where the river was clear, in the very heart of a drift pile. Even there we could not escape the bitter wind, and between the cold and the hard sand and the smoke we had no great temptation to sleep. And yet we slept too long. The ice was after us, and the ice does not stop to camp at night. When I went out in the starlight about three o'clock the river was blocked again as far as I could see. Our enemy had caught us.

Breakfast that morning took less time than lunch the day before. Both Murray, the young miner who was with me, and the Indian were anxious. All the Indian hunting camps were deserted; their fires had been cold for a week; we were the last on the river, and as we had no 'grub' with us we should not be able to get either up stream again or down stream to Wrangel before the ice became solid. In the meantime we should have to sit still amongst those impenetrable black pines in the deep snow and slowly starve to death. Better men, we knew, had done so before us, and we set our teeth and struggled through the ice all day, grudging ourselves time to speak or eat. We were pulling an oar apiece, and the Indian helped us a good deal with his paddle, though steering was his principal business; we only stopped when it was so dark that we dare not go on any further, and were rewarded by making over sixty miles in the day.

I confess that neither Murray (a man of eight-and-twenty, lean and spare, but weighing 215 lbs.) nor I could feel much life left in our arms when we stopped, but that did not trouble us. The ice was behind us, and could not catch us again. It would be open to us to go as far south that winter as we pleased, and we could laugh at our fears; though, if the truth be told, we had both of us had our eyes fixed almost all day upon a certain mountain far up the river, which, seen in a strange yellow mist peculiar to the wintry North, seemed like a vampire with spread wings hurrying after us. Even the Indian noticed its fantastic form. 'All same devil,' he said, and then turned his head and put a pound or two more beef into his paddling.

Next day we crossed to Wrangel, leaving our mast and the thwart through which it was stepped, blown overboard *en route*, and then the gates of Jötunheim are closed against us for six months. Ice and snow are now over everything; on the river all is deadly still; even the bears sleep; only somewhere, far above the cañon, away on the 'Hyland' and the 'Muddy,' two friends of mine are buried for the winter, and, in spite of anything the thermometer chooses to register, still hunt the moose and the caribou for food and sport, maintaining that they have a right to decide for themselves what is and what is not pleasure.

What a pity for some of us that Valhalla is not to be relied upon as the scene for the second act!

y
l
e
t
e
e
t
v
o
l
g
s
y
,
,
e
.
d
d
d
n
t
l
c
l
e
,
k
l
e
s
e
e
o
l